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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: BOUCHER AND TAZHIN COVER AFGHANISTAN,
NONPROLIFERATION, NARCOTICS AND THE CASPIAN

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Kazakhstan will send a survey team to Afghanistan in September to examine ways to support reconstruction, Security Council secretary Tazhin told Assistant Secretary Boucher during a September 8 meeting. Boucher welcomed the news and encouraged Kazakhstan to look at assistance projects and participation in a Provincial Reconstruction Team. Tazhin raised a series of non-proliferation issues, confirmed another rotation of troops would be sent to Iraq in the near future, and highlighted Kazakhstan's desire to obtain a naval vessel for security operations on the Caspian. Boucher informed Tazhin that the U.S. would soon fund a feasibility study for a Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline, and encouraged him to support the legal view that the agreement of only the states where such a pipeline would begin and end was necessary. Finally, Tazhin highlighted the need for increased counternarcotics cooperation. The Ambassador informed him that the U.S. had invited top Kazakhstani counternarcotics officials to Washington in December for discussions. End summary.

¶2. (U) Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard Boucher met on September 8 in Astana with Security Council secretary Marat Tazhin. The Ambassador and Pol-Econ chief (notetaker) were also present. From the Kazakhstani side, head of the MFA's European Cooperation Department Yerkin Akinzhanov, head of the MFA's Europe and Americas Department Serzhan Abdykarimov, and Security Council official Saidmurat Tanirbergen also participated.

¶3. (U) A/S Boucher opened the meeting by noting that the U.S. government was looking forward to receiving President Nazarbayev in Washington later this month, as well as to Foreign Minister Tokayev's presence at the UN General Assembly session in New York. Boucher said that he hoped to use his meetings in Astana to discuss issues related to the Nazarbayev visit, which the U.S. believes will be successful due to the deepening and broadening of the bilateral relationship in recent years.

Afghanistan: Survey Team in September

¶4. (SBU) Tazhin said that he was ready to respond to a number of issues that the U.S. had raised with the

Kazakhstani government in recent months, beginning with Afghanistan. The Kazakhstani government had formed a survey team which would visit Kazakhstan in September to examine ways to support reconstruction. Tanirbergen would represent the Security Council on the team. There were two sets of problems to examine, Tazhin stated: security and the economic aspect. Kazakhstan needed to understand how it could protect its people, as well as the scale and type of assistance needed. Tazhin underscored the need for a clear idea of what the actual results of Kazakhstani assistance might be in the current environment. He said that the Kazakhstani government would have a definite position on participation following the survey team's visit.

15. (SBU) A/S Boucher welcomed the news of the survey team, noting that the President would be glad to hear of a Kazakhstani decision to take part in a Provincial Reconstruction Team. There were a variety of these teams operating in Afghanistan, Boucher noted, some in more dangerous areas and some where the situation was calmer. The Provincial Reconstruction Teams are an important tool to help the Afghan government push its presence out to the regions.

16. (SBU) Economic development is another important aspect of bringing the benefits of government to the population, Boucher added. There was much work to be done in the priority areas of roads, electricity, and training. A/S Boucher noted that he had shared a list of possible projects with Ambassador Saudabayev in Washington; the U.S. assumed that Kazakhstan would likely be most interested in projects such as roads and electricity that support regional integration. We hoped that there would be good news on

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Kazakhstani engagement in Afghanistan during President Nazarbayev's visit to Washington.

Non-Proliferation Issues

17. (SBU) Tazhin informed A/S Boucher that Kazakhstan had taken steps to increase security at the Semipalatinsk test site in response to concerns expressed by the U.S. He stated that "according to the original agreement," Kazakhstan linked the transfer of pathogen strains to the U.S. to the construction of a Central Reference Laboratory, which had now been pushed back to 2009. Tazhin said that Kazakhstan could discuss strain transfer "only when the U.S. had fulfilled its obligations." Turning to Stepnogorsk, Tazhin repeated well-known complaints regarding the failed defense conversion project to establish a pharmaceutical tableting line in the mid-1990s. He claimed that there had been no response to the GOK's December 2005 diplomatic note on the issue.

18. (SBU) The Ambassador welcomed the assurances regarding security at Semipalatinsk. He pushed back on the strain transfer issue, noting that the Biological Threat Reduction program consisted of two independent parts: cooperative joint research on pathogens, and efforts to improve Kazakhstan's ability to detect and protect pathogens. The U.S. sees no logic in linking the two areas of cooperation, and had in fact explicitly rejected a linkage between strain transfer and construction of the Central Reference Laboratory during negotiation of the agreement. Finally, the Ambassador noted, construction of the laboratory had been pushed back due to repeated delays in negotiations by the Kazakhstani side. A decision to remove the equipment at Stepnogorsk had been taken, the Ambassador added; he would look into the status of the formal reply.

Iraq: Presence Becoming More Difficult

¶9. (SBU) Tazhin told A/S Boucher that the Kazakhstani government was finding it increasingly difficult to maintain a contingent in Iraq due to the worsening security situation and rising domestic pressure. Kazakhstani troops had been fired on five days before. Nevertheless, Tazhin said, Kazakhstan will send another rotation of troops to Iraq in a few days. He noted that Kazakhstan's contribution in Iraq was primarily political. Boucher told Tazhin that the U.S. welcomes the presence of Kazakhstani troops in Iraq and was working to ensure the best possible security for them. He stressed that Kazakhstan's contribution was not just political; the contingent was doing extremely important ordinance disposal work that had saved many lives. The Ambassador added that the U.S. was working to ensure that General Sembinov would have good meetings regarding the security situation when he accompanied the next rotation to Iraq.

Caspian Security

¶10. (SBU) Kazakhstan was pleased with the level of cooperation with the U.S. on Caspian Security, Tazhin said, particularly the dialogue between the Ministry of Defense and the Department of Defense. Kazakhstan was interested in obtaining a 1,000 ton naval vessel within the framework of U.S. assistance. A/S Boucher confirmed that the U.S. was aware of Kazakhstan's interest in obtaining a naval vessel and was examining the question.

¶11. (SBU) A/S Boucher noted that the U.S. was close to approving funding for a feasibility study on the Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline. After careful analysis of the legal situation, Boucher said, the U.S. firmly believed that only the agreement of the countries where the pipeline begins and ends is necessary. Russia and Iran were claiming that all

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states bordering the Caspian had to agree, which would make the plan impossible to implement and undercut President Nazarbayev's strategic objective of diversifying Kazakhstan's energy export routes. Boucher encouraged Tazhin to ensure that Kazakhstan pushed back against this legal view. Tazhin said that Kazakhstan had consulted numerous maritime law experts and agreed completely with the position Boucher had expressed. Unfortunately the idea was becoming prevalent that while littoral states control their own portion of the Caspian shoreline, all controlled the seabed in common, Tazhin noted. This would lead to disputes among the Caspian states, he said. A/S Boucher offered consultations with U.S. maritime law experts.

Counternarcotics

¶12. (SBU) Tazhin highlighted the seriousness of the problem of narcotics trafficking for Kazakhstan, noting that drug use was rising among Kazakhstanis. With Afghanistan so near, Tazhin explained, Kazakhstan was unable to fight the problem on its own; international assistance was required. The international community was just "watching the process calmly," Tazhin claimed. He told A/S Boucher that the Kazakhstani government's strategy was to target large narcotics traffickers. Tazhin highlighted the need to combat narcotrafficking before "political spheres" became involved, as had happened in neighboring regions. Boucher responded that the U.S. considered counternarcotics cooperation with Kazakhstan to be quite strong, but was always searching for ways to strengthen it. The Ambassador added that the U.S. had invited Minister of Interior Mukhamedzhanov and other senior officials to Washington in early December for meetings with U.S. counterparts to discuss cooperation on drug trafficking and demand

reduction.

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